

NEWINGTON TOWN HALL
131 CEDAR STREET
CONFERENCE ROOM THREE
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2010
7:00 PM

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Commissioner Thomas Bowen
Commissioner Michael Gerhart
Commissioner Val Ginn, alternate, not seated
Commissioner Michael Longo
Commissioner James Marochinni
Commissioner David Marsden, alternate, seated for vacant member
Commissioner Mary Niro
Commissioner Greg Polk
Commissioner Dana Woods
Commissioner Kevin Chick, alternate, not seated

Town Planner
Ed Meehan

II. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Commissioner Woods nominated Commissioner Niro as Chairman Pro Tem which was seconded by Commissioner Longo and approved.

A. ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 2010

Chairman Pro Tem Niro called for nomination of Chairman for the 2010 term.
Commissioner Woods moved the nomination of Thomas Shields as Chairman of the Development Commission. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Longo. The motion carried unanimously.

Vice Chairman

Chairman Shields called for nomination of Vice-Chairman for the 2010 term.
Commissioner Marsden moved the nomination of Commissioner Polk as Vice Chairman of the Development Commission. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Woods. The motion carried unanimously.

Secretary

Chairman Shields called for nomination of Commission Secretary for the 2010 term.
Commissioner Longo moved the nomination of Michael Gerhart as /secretary of the

Development Commission. Commissioner Niro seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

III. MEETING MINUTES – DECEMBER 2, 2009

Commissioner Marsden moved that the minutes of the regular meeting of December 2, 2009 be accepted. It was seconded by Commissioner Niro. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Ginn inquired as to the business call program which will be discussed at the February, 2010 meeting. Chairman Shields also emphasized revisiting the National welding site project. Mr. Meehan noted that the town had EPA and Capitol Region grants for the remediation studies and there was also a structural building analysis. The costs involved removal of the asbestos of approximately \$1.3 million to and to clean up the contaminated soil etc., is another million. The environmental firm recommends capping it for reuse. This all adds up to approximately \$2,500,000.00 of remediation funds. Mr. Meehan added that this is a work in progress seeking the Town Council's approval for the town, the private sector and the DOT to agree on the utility corridor, cross easements for drainage and roadway access to Fenn Road which will put up an RFP to market the site. If Hays-Kaufman, the state DOT and the town can get together, a very strong RFP will start marketing this site. This is undoubtedly a major project for the Town Council this year. Commissioner Bowen inquired as to a local traffic impact study and Mr. Meehan noted that this was done when Hays-Kaufman received approval for building the hotel/restaurant uses. Commissioner Bowen inquired as to any state concerns regarding the traffic on Cedar Street and how important and necessary it is to get our own view of local traffic impact, especially if National Welding is going to be one of our top priorities. Chairman Shields added this body has been looking at this site for the last five years with Mr. Meehan noting that this area in total is approximately 12 acres of prime real estate, redevelopable land, mixed use which could include retail, office and residential development. The interlocking decision making is complex and it is up to the Town Council, Connecticut DOT and private sector developers.

A. DISCUSSION OF DRAFT 2020 PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT DRAFT #2 July 22, 2009

Chairman Shields referred to page 35, Item 6 suggesting to delete references for "high density housing", keeping it a commercial zone i.e., National Welding site. Commissioner Bowen inquired as to the height of building in that area. Mr. Meehan

noted that the maximum would be 40 feet and with residential being 4 stories – and suggested one of the ways to develop this unique corner site would be to establish a new zone in order to secure federal money for transit oriented development. Commissioner Bowen added that in other parts of this document whenever “transit oriented development” is discussed this also includes “high density housing”, so if this wording is used to come before the TPZ and in other areas whenever you say “transit oriented” you say “high density housing” in other parts of the document such as here, when you see “transit oriented” alone, they could argue there is an implication that you wanted “high density housing” – and Commissioner Bowen suggested that in other parts of the document whenever you talked about “transit oriented” development, you remove the concept of “high density housing” or else the plan is inferring what the Chairman does not want, so in other parts of the document references to “high density” should be changed or deleted.

Chairman Shields noted that, hopefully, with an economic upswing Newington should be on the ground floor level to get something going in the National Welding area. Mr. Meehan agreed that these four acres could be a big windfall for the town and with the Town Plan getting support from this commission’s economic perspective is very important.

Chairman Shields also noted that the Newington Junction area near West Hill Road warrants development, which Mr. Meehan defined as an opportunity site and even 10 years from now could see a fair amount of commercial development at the former Cashway Lumber site and further north along Willard Avenue up to Spring Street. Commissioner Bowen stressed that what is a good transition between the two, maybe office buildings AND residential housing. Mr. Meehan once again flagged the key word issue – transit oriented development – as being the issue, and what does that connote in people’s minds? Commissioner Marsden stated that having sat in on the busway committee meetings, transient oriented development means that the state wanted to develop both residential, retail and mixed use development. Mr. Meehan added that the TOD concept is to cluster a certain amount of residential use within a walking distance to a station but the Town still retains the local land use by its authority to set zoning standards.

Mr. Meehan referred to a recommendation in the plan about expanding the Town Center to include a small section of the north side of Cedar Street between Center Court and Hawley Street, for which the neighbors spoke against – this area goes back to the Community Action Plan in the early 1970’s – and studies came up with the possibility of commercial development on the north side of East Cedar as well as the south side – so if this commission does not think it is relevant today, then it should be removed from the plan. Commissioner Bowen requested that the Draft 2020 Plan be kept on “old business” in future agendas.

B. STATUS OF MUNICIPAL PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Town Planner Ed Meehan summarized that the contractor has completed a binder course, light standards in place and next will be the shaping of the center green and installing traffic control signs and shaping of sidewalks near the Century 21 area. Commissioner Bowen was concerned about businesses voicing to him problems with parking in this area, incurring a loss of business. Mr. Meehan stated that a project such as this one will have a few days when access is limited and the contractor tries to keep the site safe and mitigate problems.

VI. REMARKS BY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Ginn stated that there will be a report of the Downtown Business Association at next month's meeting. Commissioner Ginn also announced that the Farmer's Market will be opening in May and was very enthusiastic as there are at least ten farms participating this summer. At the next meeting the Newington Open for Business luncheon will also be discussed.

Mr. Meehan informed the members that at Northwood Plaza there was nothing new to report. Commissioner Woods noted that Savers has opened next to Connecticut Beverage. Commissioner Marsden noted that the Hallmark Store is closing on Fenn Road.

VII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Marsden made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Niro seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sophie Glenn
Recording Secretary